

**Texas Department of  
Criminal Justice**

**August 2017**

**Risk Management**

**Hurricane Safety Tips**

Hurricanes are not just a coastal problem. A hurricane's impact can be felt hundreds of miles inland. It's easy to forget what a hurricane is capable of doing. The U.S. has not been directly impacted by a major hurricane (Category 3 or higher) in more than a decade. However, hurricanes such as Ike, Sandy, and Isaac reminded us that significant impacts can occur without it being a major hurricane. Many people are suffering from hurricane amnesia in the forms of complacency, denial and inexperience. Do not let a hurricane take you by surprise. Be prepared for the worst and hope for the best.

Hurricanes bring many hazards to Texas coastlines and inland areas. These hazards include:

- Storm surge along the coast.
- Inland flooding due to heavy rainfall.
- Tornadoes and strong winds.

There are different stages and degrees of severities of hurricanes:

- **Tropical Depression:** Maximum sustained winds of 38 miles per hour (mph) or 33 knots or less (a knot is a nautical mile per hour, abbreviated kt; 1 knot = 1.15 mph)
- **Tropical Storm:** Maximum sustained winds of 39-73 mph (34-63 kt)
- **Hurricane:** Maximum sustained winds of 74 mph (64 kt) or higher
- **Major Hurricane:** Maximum sustained winds of 111 mph (96 kt) or higher. Classified as Category 3 or higher.

Although forecasting these storms has been improved significantly in recent years, the death toll from storm surges has climbed. This is due to a population shift to the coastal regions.

Developing an evacuation plan is an important part of hurricane safety. When planning to evacuate, the first thing you need to do is find out if you live in a storm surge hurricane evacuation zone or in a home that would be unsafe during a hurricane. If you are, figure out where you would go and how you would get there if told to evacuate. You do not need to travel hundreds of miles. Identify someone, perhaps a friend or relative who does not live in an evacuation zone or unsafe home, and arrange with them to stay at their home if you need to evacuate. Be sure to account for your pets, as most local shelters do not permit them. Put the plan in writing.

You are going to need supplies, not just enough to get through the storm, but also for the possibility of a lengthy aftermath. Have enough non-perishable food, water, and medicine to last each person in your family a **minimum of one week**. Electricity and water could be out for at least that long. You will need extra cash, a battery-powered radio and flashlights. Many of us have cell phones, and they all run on batteries. You may need a portable, crank or solar powered USB charger.

Call your insurance company or agent and ask for an insurance check-up to make sure you have enough homeowners insurance to repair or even replace your home. Do not forget coverage for your car or boat. Remember, standard homeowners insurance does not cover flooding. Whether you are a homeowner or renter, you will need a separate policy for it, and it's available through your company, agent or the National Flood Insurance Program at [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov). The sooner you act the better. Flood insurance requires a 30-day waiting period.

If you plan to ride out the storm in your home, make sure it is in good repair. Have the proper plywood, steel or aluminum panels to board up the windows and doors. Keep in mind the garage door is the most vulnerable part of the home, so it must be able to withstand the winds. Trim trees, pick up loose outdoor yard items, and find a safe location for your vehicle. Making these preparations and staying aware, will give you the best possible outcome when facing a hurricane emergency.